

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, March 1. 1709.

I Have been talking of letting in Foreigners among us, in order to increase the Numbers of these strange two leg'd, unfeather'd Animals, call'd *True-Born-Englishmen* ; That heterogeneous, unnatural Monster, that is alone distinguish'd from all the World by this, that he is against propogating his own Kind ; the mighty Word spoken at first by him, whose Words were Causes, and commanded Effects ; the mighty Word spoken by him, to whom to command, to do, and to cause to be done, is all one ; that mighty Word, when it said to all the World, *increase and multiply*, it form'd a Propensity in the whole Creation to perform it ; one Sex profess to own that Propensity, and the other Sex, tho' Custom has interpos'd,

that unnatural Vertue Modesty, to pretend a Resistance, yet has Compliance formed upon even that Reluctance it self, and upon every Circumstance relating to it.

The Brutes of all Kinds obey this great Law, all the Plants and Fruits of the Earth assent to it, Times and Seasons, all the Ebbs and Fluxes in the Sea of Nature consent ; Propagation of Kind is a standing Law, *increase and multiply* is a Word given from Heaven, and the whole Earth obeys, except as before excepted ; But this *True-Born-Englishman*, a meer Non-Natural, a Thing born by Transplantation, a promiscuous Birth, hates his own Original, and abhors the Increase.

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But now let us examine, who are they that object against the receiving of Foreigners here, and naturalizing them; They are, generally speaking, 1. Our Tradesmen, Artificers and Manufacturers. 2. Our Corporation-Men. As to Corporation-Tyranny, I take it to be one of the greatest Enemies to Trade, the greatest Discouragement of Industry, the greatest Badge of voluntary Captivity that we have left in the Nation, and it would take up a whole Volume to expose it, as it deserves.

That such a Tradesman, such a Handicraft Man, such a Shop-keeper shall not open Shop in this Town, or in this City or Corporation, because he has not serv'd seven Years to it, and been made free; every Corporation is an exclusive Company upon Trade, and some People are mighty fond of exclaiming against such a Thing; now is it not very odd to hear Mr. M—r and his Blunderbusses, I should say his Aldermen, talk of Liberty and Property, and the mighty Weight of a Freeholder? — I am a Freeholder in a County, and from me, *that is*, from my Ancestors, and that *by Grant* of meer Grace and Good-Will, all these Corporations obtain'd their exclusive Privileges, and yet if I have a Mind to set up a Trade in this Town, I shall not be admitted, because I am no Freeman; where's the Consistency of this, with what you call *English* Freedom? — But farther, where's the Consistency of this, with the Prosperity of Trade? How has it check'd the Encrease of Towns, and the Confluence of People to the Capital Cities of the Nation? — Let any Man enquire of the Inhabitants of *Bristol*, and ask them, how much larger had that City been than now it is, would

they have open'd this Barrier, and taken off the Restraint of their exclusive Authority, of which this is a remarkable Proof; that at *one Gate*, where the Liberties of that City do not extend far beyond the Gate, the Buildings encrease, the Ground-Rents are dear, and Inhabitants come every Day to settle; at all the other Gates, there is no Sign of it, Privileges depopulate, and the Towns decay, merely because the Inhabitants will not let them encrease: The rich Trading Towns in the North, such as *Manchester*, and *Rochdale*, *Sheffield*, *Wakefield*, *Gainsbro'*, and the like, where they have no Corporation, and consequently none of this Mischief, do they not encrease, grow wealthy and populous, and thrive as fast as any Places in *England*, and some of them have (as they say) more People than the City of *Tork*? — To what Purpose then is the Pageantry of Bodies Politick? Where are the Advantages? And what is the Use of them?

And after all, why are the Corporations against this Naturalizing-Bill? It gives them no Uneasiness or Disturbance; for naturalizing a Foreigner, makes him indeed an *English* Man, but makes him free of no Corporation, nor can he set up a Trade by Vertue of his Naturalization, in any Place where he could not have set up a Trade before; so that the Corporations are not concern'd in it; and 'tis plain, the City of *London*, tho' they would perhaps be against it, if they could; yet foreseeing that it would not affect any of their Privileges, they pointed the Complaint against their Loss of Money, not their Want of Power, which Loss if it be made good, they acquiesce readily, and well they may.

Of the Case of Insolvents in England.

IT may be wonder'd, why I have laid this Case by so long, while so many miserable People are imploring Relief from the Clemency and Compassion of the Parliament—— Indeed I have not so laid it by as to neglect them, but I foresaw their Cause not hasty in coming on, and even when it shall come on; I cannot say, I find that Disposition for a publick Pity, as I wish was in general planted in the Minds of the People.

England will for ever be voted to be the most merciful Nation under Heaven in every other Case, and methinks 'tis hard, She should be the most cruel in Case of Debtors; we pity Thieves and Murderers, and perhaps too often bear with their Crimes, tho' wilful and destructive; while we shew no Compassion to Debtors, tho' their Crime may be perfectly casual and inevitable.

To look a little into the Particulars, I cannot but think, it would be a very moving Thing to represent to the Consideration of our Legislators, the present horrid Prospect of the Insolvents in this Kingdom, upon which some needful Reflections might very well be made; and this would be the first, viz. That since it is not thus in any Nation in the World but ours, there must certainly be among us some great Mistake about this Matter, and that we are most assuredly in the Wrong in our Management of these People; and this Prospect will produce the following Heads, if some, that pretend to be very accurate, in their Calculations, are not very much mistaken.

(*Viz.*) That there are in this Kingdom of the several Kinds of Insolvents, and great Part of whom we may in Charity believe would be very glad to surrender their Effects to their Creditors, a most prodigious Number, and which may be divided, as follows.

(*Viz.*) Bankrupt Tradesmen and Insolvent Debtors; as well Prisoners at large as close Prisoners; Shelterers in pri-

vileg'd Places, and such as abscond from their Creditors, of all which Kinds, they say, there are above 80000, most of whom have Families, Wives, and Children innumerable, whose Miseries and Disasters are deriv'd from the other, and depending upon them, *and who are*, while the other are in their Disasters and Distresses, whether in Prison or out, actually either starving and languishing, in Want and Necessity, and living on the cold Charity of Friends, or eating and destroying the Estates of their Creditors.

Of these are to be reckon'd;

1. Prisoners at large, under the expensive Licence, and precarious, dear-bought Liberty of Goalors and Keepers of Prisons, above 40000.
2. Shelterers, and such as lurk in the Rules, Verges, and allow'd Privileges of Prisons, Palaces, Houses of the Nobility, or under Protections and Listings of Soldiers, &c. and such new-fashion'd Shifts, as place them a little out of the Reach of the Law, about 20000.
3. Absconders, who conceal themselves in private Retreats in their Own or Friends Houses, that live as it were, out of Sight of Danger, and under the constant Terror of Arrests, Escape-Warrants, and the Fury and Prosecution of inexorable Creditors, at least 10000.
4. Banished Persons, who being made desperate by the Cruelty of Creditors, the Severity of the late Acts for Bankrupts Surrenders, terrify'd with Escape-Warrants, and the Dread of perpetual Imprisonment, are fled out of the Kingdom, some with, some without their Families, and all with what Estate they can secure; by which they help both to depopulate and impoverish the Country, and are a strong Motive to press us to that most

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necessary Work of a general Naturalization; of these I reckon at least 5000.

5. Close Prisoners of sundry Sorts for Debt, in all the several Goals of this Kingdom, who are the most miserable Objects of the Nations Compassion at this Time, and if I may give my Opinion, a great Scandal both to the Wisdom and the Humanity of the English, above 5000.

I do not insist upon the Nicety of the Calculation, but I am perswaded, I am not wide from probable Truth; and if not, it cannot but be worth the Concern of the Legislation of Britain, to provide some Relief for such a miserable Multitude.

I shall in my next subdivide again the 5000 nam'd in the last Article, wherein the wretched Effects of Escape-Warrants, Extents from the Crown, and inveterately prosecuted Commissions of Bankrupt, may appear; and all this in order to enquire, what Fruit we have of all our Severities, Things of which we ought to be ashamed.

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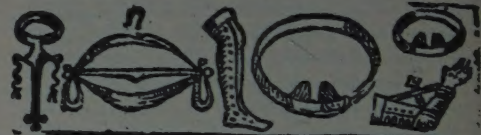
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